

**Governor's Office of Homeland Security  
and Emergency Preparedness**  
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS  
GOVERNOR



JAMES B. WASKOM  
DIRECTOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

March 18, 2016

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Mike Steele  
[mike.steele@la.gov](mailto:mike.steele@la.gov)  
225-788-0095

**State Response to Historic Flood Event, AG/FEMA Issue Scam Warning**

**BATON ROUGE (March 18, 2016)** – The Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) continues to coordinate the state's response to the current flood event impacting much of the state. New reports supplied by parishes indicate more than 11,000 homes have received some type of flood damage. Governor John Bel Edwards' request that President Barack Obama expand the existing federal declaration for the State of Louisiana to include another three parishes has been granted. Allen, Ascension, and Calcasieu make up the three new parishes included in the president's declaration. 26 Louisiana parishes are now eligible for Federal assistance. More parishes may be added as part of the recovery process.

Any disaster, unfortunately, results in an increased risk for scams as cleanup and repairs begin. The Louisiana Attorney General's Office offers this advice to residents impacted by the flooding:

- **Do not donate to any charity that asks for cash or wired donations and does not provide proof your contribution would be tax-deductible. You may search the IRS website to determine which organizations are eligible to receive tax deductible contributions at <https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/>.**
- **Be wary of charities that arise immediately after a natural disaster. Learn more about a charity's trustworthiness on the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance website at <http://give.org/>.**
- **Insist on a face-to-face transaction with a rental agreement. Visit the physical location of the advertised rental property and know many con artists advertise**

March 18, 2016

**rental property on social media sites, requiring the potential renter to wire money.**

- **Get at least three itemized, detailed bids from licensed contractors. Make sure the contractor is licensed through the Louisiana State Licensing Board for Contractors at [www.lslbc.louisiana.gov](http://www.lslbc.louisiana.gov).**
- **Always require the contractor show you proof of insurance such as workman's compensation and general liability insurance. Call that insurer to confirm coverage.**
- **Do not agree to a large down payment. If possible – accompany the contractor to the building supply store, pay for the materials yourself, and have materials delivered directly to jobsite.**
- **Get a guarantee and a contract in writing. Any changes in the contract should be in writing and initialed by both parties.**
- **Always pay contractors by check or money order and keep a receipt. Write all checks to the company, not the individual worker.**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) advises all residents that no individual with a government disaster assistance agency will call or text asking for financial account information. Survivors also should keep in mind that federal and state workers never ask for or accept money and always carry identification badges. There is no fee required to apply for or to get disaster assistance.

Scam attempts can be made over the phone, by mail or email, text or in person. There seems to be no limit to the inventiveness of those wanting to commit fraud. Louisiana residents are asked to remain alert, ask questions and require photo identification when someone claims to represent a government agency. Those who question the validity of a contact or suspect fraud are encouraged to call the toll free FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721.

GOHSEP urges everyone to continue to use caution in areas where floodwaters remain. Monitor DOTD's [www.511la.org](http://www.511la.org) website for updated road closure information. Look for advisories from your local authorities and emergency managers.

FEMA will deploy Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams to support the registration of individuals for the Individual Assistance Grant program. Individuals may also register on the web or by phone as follows:

[www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov)

1-800-621-3362

TTY: 1-800-462-7585

March 18, 2016

You can find the latest information on the state's response at [www.emergency.la.gov](http://www.emergency.la.gov). GOHSEP also provides information on Facebook and Twitter. You can receive emergency alerts on most smartphones and tablets by downloading the new Alert FM App. It is free for basic service. You can also download the Louisiana Emergency Preparedness Guide and find other information at [www.getagameplan.org](http://www.getagameplan.org).

**###**